Mercury
Mercury pollution has both natural and human sources. Most of it is released during the burning of coal. It deposits into the water from the air and ends up in the fish we eat. Mercury poisoning can be fatal and small doses cause developmental disease in children. This led the EPA to recommend pregnant women limit their exposure by avoiding fish high in mercury.

Persistence: 5
Toxicity: 4
Bioaccumulation: 4

PCBs
Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs) are man made organic chemicals that were used as a coolants for electrical equipment until they were banned in 1977. PCBs cause cancer, as well as disease for the immune system, reproductive system, nervous system, and endocrine system.

Persistence: 4
Toxicity: 3
Bioaccumulation: 5

Bacteria
The most dangerous bacteria in water come from untreated human waste water. If people come in contact with the polluted water they can get very sick. Unlike chemical pollution, bacteria is a living thing.

Persistence: 2
Toxicity: 5
Bioaccumulation: 1

Dioxin
Dioxins are a type of chemical that can be released to the environment by burning trash. Once a person eats food contaminated with dioxin it will stay in their body for at least 8 years. It can cause cancer, and other diseases like diabetes.

Persistence: 5
Toxicity: 4
Bioaccumulation: 5

Nitrates
Fertilizers and human waste entering a river or lake increases the nitrate concentration and changes the balance in the ecosystem. Simple life like algae and plankton can grow in number rapidly, causing death in other species. A clear lake will turn cloudy and colored with this type of pollution.

Persistence: 3
Toxicity: 3
Bioaccumulation: 1

Crude Oil
Crude oil is transported across the ocean in large tanker ships. Occasionally the ships spill large amounts of the oil into the ocean. The oil will coat the surface of the water. Animals that come in contact with the spill can become sick and die.

Persistence: 3
Toxicity: 3
Bioaccumulation: 3

Perchlorate
Perchlorate is used in rocket fuel and flares. Drinking water with perchlorate pollution can cause disease in humans, because it interrupts production of hormones. Exposure in children can keep them from developing normally.

Persistence: 4
Toxicity: 3
Bioaccumulation: 3

Lead
Lead is a naturally occurring element that is toxic to humans. It has had many uses in the past, including paints, batteries, and as a fuel additive. Drinking water with lead pollution can cause damage to the nervous system. Children are more susceptible to lead related diseases like blood and brain disorders.

Persistence: 5
Toxicity: 5
Bioaccumulation: 4

Arsenic
Arsenic is a chemical element. It is notoriously toxic and is used in insecticides and herbicides. An estimated 52 million people drink water with more arsenic in it than is recommended by the World Health Organization. Even extremely low concentration can lead to cancer and high doses can cause death.

Persistence: 5
Toxicity: 5
Bioaccumulation: 2